

Correlation - A Study between Library Usage and Student Attainment

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ABSTRACT

This study examines students' use of academic libraries and tries to clarify what educational outcomes are achieved in relation to their patterns of library use. Using the library for its material or for research purposes, as the learners group does, is the use that is most likely to have a direct connection to students' educational outcomes. However, another use pattern, strolling among the bookshelves, is notable because this study shows strong links between it, and educational outcomes and motivation for students' learning. Academic libraries are under increasing pressure from higher education administrators to demonstrate that library services contribute to student academic success. The purpose of this scoping review is to examine the research methods used to investigate academic library contributions to undergraduate academic success.

Keywords: Library usage, student attainment, low use, non-use, academic libraries, undergraduate students, achievement.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the universalization of higher education, universities and colleges are expanding their educational fields to appeal to students with a greater variety of interests and are trying out various innovations in their educational programs, including the incorporation of new teaching methods. Accompanying these changes is the demand for accountability on the part of institutions as to their educational quality and effectiveness. Academic libraries, in this context, are assessed on how well they are aligned with the roles their parent institutions undertake. The results of assessment of such institutions and their libraries are pertinent as evidence in support of accountability. The competitive environment in which university libraries operate and provide their services and resources is one of the biggest challenges to engage today's undergraduate students. There is a limited amount of high quality attention and time students have, to be able to be engaged with what the library offers to them. Planning and designing library awareness and information literacy programs, particularly for new students has presented itself as an on-going challenge for librarians worldwide in recent times. However, the goalpost keeps on moving and the players are becoming more restless, demanding and seeking instant gratification. The purpose of this paper is to examine undergraduate students' experience with research, library and information use prior to coming to university and their behaviour and attitude towards library and information after they have been exposed to a variety of library awareness activities.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of library and its impact on student learning is visible and illustrated in many studies. The library worth should not be considered or judge in financial manner as it consider as hub to provide information for its users. Lutz & Field (1998) concluded that the major purpose of the university is not profit, except in the ultimate sense of society profit. Success of universities should not be measured in dollars and cents, therefore libraries also operate to support motive of universities and colleges. But expenditure on libraries must show ROI as they give proper learning opportunities and information to final users. Matthews (2003) showed their judgment about libraries that libraries must demonstrate that they use financial resources effectively and responsibly. As Pike et al. (2006) conducted the research on same perspective and find the strong positive correlations to student engagement and institutional expenditures on academic support (including libraries). The expenditure cut on libraries may have negative consequences for student retention and graduation (Hamrick, et al. 2004). Library is the destination where student feel the information hub for them, where they can extract information in peaceful and easiest way as Heinstrom & Todd (2006) argued that value the library as a quiet comfortable place where student can work in dependently and without distraction. Small & Snyder (2009) showed the priority of students that keep the book collection in order and maintain a quiet place for them to study with light and easy mind frame. Libraries also support institute to achieve its academic mission (Hernon & Altman, 1998; Everest & Payne 2001; Kuh & Gonyea, 2003; Oakleaf, 2011). An overwhelming majority of students also felt that the school library played a critical role in their learning by usefulness of the information, better writer and

reader (Bledidt, 2011). Reading of literature cooperates to in learning of student which enriches their understandings of theories and issues. School libraries promote higher reading achievement through access to books and free reading. (Krashen, 1995). DepEd (2009) & McQuillan & Au (2001) proposed that proficiency in reading leads to better scholastic performance as students are able to comprehend what they are reading which able them to learn and sharpen their skills and knowledge. One other study of New York Comprehensive Center, (2011) explained that those institutes providing the increase access to the library through flexible scheduling found their students 10% better performing in reading and 11% in writing on the particular test as compare to those institutes which providing less access. Bleidt (2011) found the positive relationship between investment in school libraries and student achievement in reading and writing. Kim (2004) also confirmed about the positive relationship between accessibility to books and student enrollment in institution.

III. PURPOSES AND OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

As could be surmised from the study by Toda and Nagata (2007), there is no uniformity in students' use of the library. The study also showed that the "benefits of library use" and "learning outcomes" attained are somehow related to the ways in which students use the library. Focusing on this point, the current study attempts to understand students' use of academic libraries and clarify what educational outcomes are achieved in relation to their patterns of library use. Student expectations and demands of the library are reflected in their library usage, and if these are related to certain educational outcomes, the results of this study may be useful to promote certain types of library use that are more efficient in attaining desired outcomes. Also, if it is possible to predict the level of outcomes affected by the identified types of library use, this process can be examined further to develop into a method of outcomes assessment.

First, focus group interviews were conducted in Mie University as a preliminary investigation to understand students' library use. The transcripts were analyzed and developed into questionnaire items that would measure their use of the library. The first paper survey followed. But since we were not able to conduct the paper survey in Mie University, but in Keio University, we compensated for this change by incorporating data from a set of focus group interviews conducted afterwards with students who had participated in the paper survey into our interpretation of the results. Thus, this study conducted both focus group interviews and a paper survey, and the analyses are based on the combination of these.

IV. CORRELATION BETWEEN LIBRARY USAGE AND STUDENT ATTAINMENT: DOES LIBRARY USAGE RELATE TO STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE?

Student success can be measured using course, term, and overall GPA, retention, and time to graduation. This effect size can be assessed by comparing performance between students who use library resources and students who do not use library resources. And if there is a positive impact on student success, we will identify the library interaction points which have the greatest impact and allocate additional resources to them.

In 2010, the University of Huddersfield reported on its analysis of anonymised library usage data (access to e-resources, book loans and access to the library against student attainment) (White and Stone, 2010) from over 700 courses over four years (2005/6–2008/9) against student attainment. At the time it was suggested that there appeared to be a strong correlation between usage data and student attainment at both school and course level, although this had yet to be proved to be statistically significant.

V. THE LIBRARY IMPACT DATA PROJECT

The Library Impact Data Project (LIDP) is a collaborative project between the University of Huddersfield and seven partners: University of Bradford; De Montfort University; University of Exeter; University of Lincoln; Liverpool John Moores University; University of Salford and Teesside University. The project was awarded JISC funding for 6 months (February–July 2011) to prove the hypothesis that 'there is a statistically significant correlation across a number of universities between library activity data and student attainment'. E-resources usage, library borrowing statistics, and library gate entries were measured against final degree award for 33,074 undergraduate students across eight U.K. universities. The research successfully demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between library resource use and level of degree result; however, any conclusions drawn are not indicators that library usage and student attainment have a causal relationship.

An alternative method to explore the link between attainment and library services is by using a citation analysis to look for connections between library use/user education and student grades/quality of work. Again, the success of such studies in quantifying the quality of student bibliographies relies on students finding it necessary to use scholarly library resources to compete the assignment.

VI. STUDENTS' LIBRARY USE AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

It is generally agreed that library use is indeed beneficial (or even indispensable) for students to achieve their educational outcomes. But to prove that it really does so, or to what degree it contributes to students' attainment of educational outcomes is not at all easy. Ethelene Whitmire (2002), for example, examined the relation between library resources and services and students' educational outcomes through multiple regression analysis, utilizing the data

collected by the CSEQ (College Student Experience Questionnaire) and the NCES (National Center for Education Statistics). Two assumptions underlie her study: “(1) undergraduates attending institutions with large amounts of academic library resources and services would participate in more academic library activities and (2) undergraduates attending institutions with large amounts of academic library resources and services would report greater gains in critical thinking”. Three sets of independent variables were defined as 1) background characteristic variables, (gender; race; age), 2) college experience variables (grade-point averages; class year; enrollment status; student-faculty interactions; engagement writing activities; active learning activities; number of term papers written; hours spent studying per week), and 3) academic library variables (resources; services). The dependent variables were defined as 1) library use (usage as a place; use of indexes to journal articles; developing a bibliography for term papers; use card catalog or computer; ask a librarians for help; reading in the reserve or reference section; check out books; checked citations in material read; reading a basic reference; found materials in browsing stacks), and 2) self-reported gains in critical thinking skills (ability to think analytically and logically; ability to put ideas together, see relationships, similarities and differences between ideas; ability to learn on your own, pursue ideas, and find information you need).

VII. SCHOOL LIBRARY’S ROLE IN LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

In response to concerns over poor literacy standards, in 2010 the Scottish Government established the Literacy Action Plan “to raise standards of literacy for all from the early years through to adulthood” (Scottish Government 2010 p.3) and local authorities and the library services within them are striving to set out plans to enable that vision. The Literacy Action Plan document recognizes the work of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies 2009 in establishing the link between poor socio-economic status and failure to reach basic standards of literacy.

Traditionally, a key role for school librarians has been the development of reading. They ensure the collection has leisure reading material and initiate a number of reading promotional activities to raise awareness of books and authors, such as author visits and reading programmes. Thus, school librarians are in a key position to take the Literacy Action Plan forward within their own schools. Whether pleasure reading alone is enough to develop the analytical skills needed to use information in a timely and appropriate way is less clear.

Information Literacy has been prominent internationally in the library and information field since the 1990s and many definitions have been created. In the USA, information literacy was incorporated into the standards for school libraries in 1998 with the publication of *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (AASL and AECT 1998) and have been updated with the publication of *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (AASL 2007). In the UK, the CILIP’s Information Literacy Group website states: “Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner.” (CILIP CSG Information Literacy 2013). Technology and its widespread use across education has inspired teaching professionals to find creative ways of using 3 digital tools to encourage learning, for example the NFER FutureLab’s Enquiring Schools programme (NFER 2013). Digital literacy is now viewed by the Scottish Government as an important skill set for the workforce of the future (Scottish Government 2013). Many school librarians have been embracing technology not only to inspire learning but also as an important management tool for cataloguing and delivering information to library users at a point of need. However as a profession, librarians have also been aware of the problems that abundant and easily accessible information poses for many users and view digital literacy as just one, albeit important, aspect of information literacy.

In response to the research and advocacy work done by Irving and Crawford through the Scottish Information Literacy Project between 2004 and 2010 (Irving and Crawford 2013), Education Scotland has taken on board the significance of information literacy and has incorporated it into the Curriculum for Excellence.

VIII. CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) began in 2002 with a national debate and consultation, and schools implemented the new curriculum during the 2010- 11 school year (Education Scotland 2013b). The curriculum was designed to provide children and young people with the knowledge, skills and attributes for learning, life and work in a manner that encompasses challenge, engagement and motivation, and encourages the desire for high achievement. It is guided by the principles of challenge and enjoyment, breadth of experiences, progression through the ages three to eighteen, depth of knowledge and understanding, personalisation to encompass individual needs and opportunities to exercise personal choice, coherence of progression and across aspects of learning, and relevance to enable understanding of their learning context and relevance beyond the school environment. The curriculum takes a whole school approach encompassing experiences and outcomes, curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, ethos and life of the school, and opportunities for personal achievement. The purpose of the curriculum encapsulates four capacities: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors and has three areas across the curriculum seen as the responsibility of all within the school environment: health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy (Education Scotland 2013c). This curriculum framework provides opportunities for school librarians to become proactive in providing support across the four capacities and cross curricular responsibilities, aligning services to the curriculum and individual school priorities: “The role of school librarians in the secondary sector cannot be underestimated. Their understanding of different learning styles and collaboration with teaching colleagues enables them to act as a bridge

between young people, teachers, information and the curriculum. Their potential contribution towards meeting the National Priorities for Education is therefore considerable.“ (SLIC and HMIE 2005) 4 School libraries are now seen, in theory as least, as fully included within the Scottish school curriculum.

IX. SCHOOL LIBRARY IMPACT RESEARCH

In recent years there have been worldwide concerns over the financial crisis, interest in educational standards, including literacy development, and the need to measure impact. Researchers in the library and information field throughout the world have been examining the impact of library services on learning and what factors are significant in determining impact. Evidence of impact of school libraries has been accumulating since the early work of Stewart et al. in 1957 and Gaver in 1963 (cited by Farmer 2006). Keith Curry Lance began his studies in the early 1990s and since then researchers have begun adding to this work, the majority being carried out in the USA. These impact studies are constantly being described and discussed on a variety of websites and in reviews, including: Links to state studies can be found at the US Library Research Service website: <http://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies/> Kachel and US Mansfield University students' summaries of impact studies by school library service component at: <http://library.mansfield.edu/impact.asp> h

And the US Scholastics reviews of 2004 and more recent “School Libraries Work!” 2008, available at: <http://listbuilder.scholastic.com/content/stores/LibraryStore/pages/images/SLW3.pdf>

Report of the Californian impact study (Achterman, 2008)

Lonsdale (2003), and more recently in Hughes and Bozorgian's study (2013, pp. 61-63), the literature was reviewed for the Australia school library community.

X. THE EVIDENCE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IMPACTING LEARNING

The school library impact studies reviewed for this project identified types of learning that can be grouped under three main categories of learning indicators. In turn, these indicators are recognisable components of school 15 learning in general, including the Curriculum for Excellence. These indicators of learning are: Higher test or exam scores, equating to academic attainment; Successful curriculum or learning outcomes, including the development and practice of information literacy; and Evidence of positive attitudes towards learning.

XI. CONCLUSION

This exploratory study contributes to the body of knowledge about various techniques used to promote library services and resources and the library marketing literature by examining in great depth the effectiveness of promotional tools used and the factors influencing the effective promotion techniques used. It compares the current findings with those of existing empirical studies of library promotion techniques used and regards the roles of demographics, human capital and library characteristics.

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